

# From horsepower to electrification Tramways in Batavia-Jakarta 1869 – 1962

by drs (Msc) Dirk Teeuwen, The Netherlands 1910

*Because of the summarizing character of this article there is no arrangement in chapters and paragraphs. A tram line map is placed on page 5. Account of sources regarding text and pictures could be found on page 11.*

Finally the street-car traffic at Batavia / Jakarta came in the hands of the N. V. Bataviasche Verkeers Maatschappij BVM / Batavia Traffic Company Ltd., which company was founded in 1930 July 31<sup>st</sup>. This enterprise has been in operation until 1942 March 17<sup>th</sup> and afterwards. BVM was the outcome of an amalgamation of:

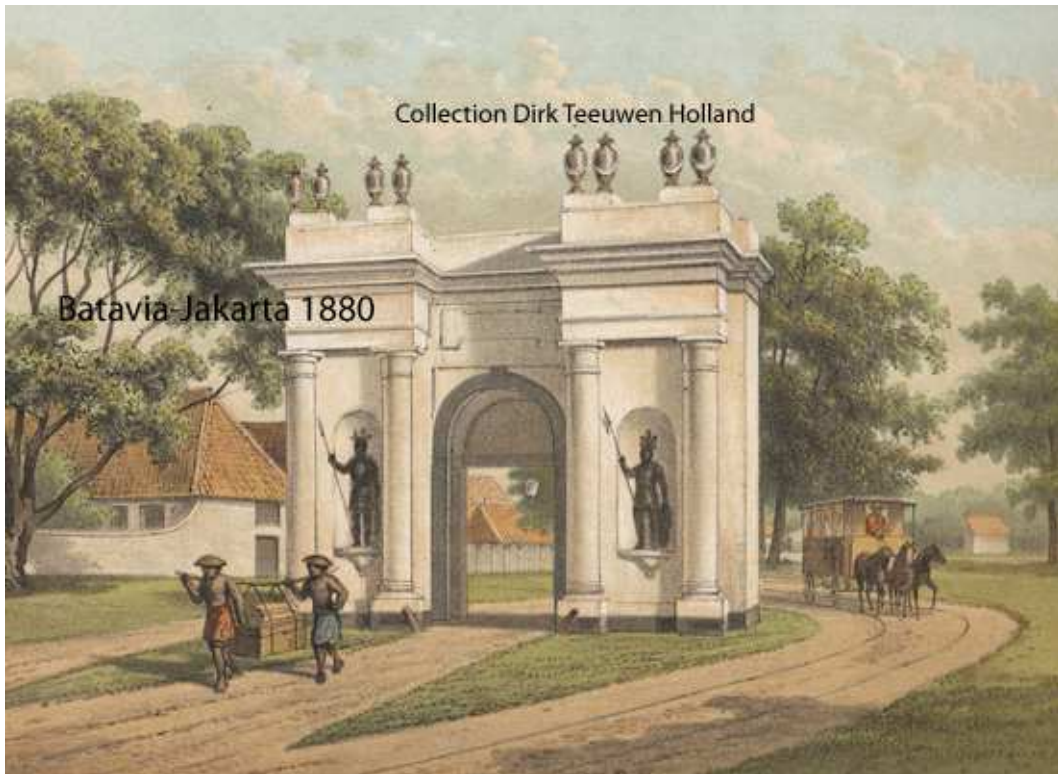
- the Nederlandsch-Indische Tramweg-Maatschappij NITM / Dutch East-Indian Steamtram Company - dating from 1881;
- and the Batavia Electric Tram-Maatschappij BETM / Batavia Electric Tramway Company from the year 1897.

The NITM company's predecessor, the Bataviasche Tramweg-Maatschappij BTM / Batavia Tramway Company as well as the Firma / Firm Dummler & Co, started the horse-tram line nr 1: Old Batavia / Jakarta Kota (Amsterdam Gate at the northern end of Prinsenstraat / Jl Cengke) – Molenvliet / Jl Gaja Madah – Harmonie / Harmoni on April 20<sup>th</sup> 1869. (More text on page 2)



1. Interior of the Batavia horse-tram, line one  
Lithograph by jhr J. C. Rappard, 1880

2. (Page 2) The horse-tram, line nr 1, near the Amsterdam Gate at the northern end of Prinsenstraat / Jl Cengke, Oud Batavia / Jakarta Kota 1880



Later that year also line nr 2 was brought into operation: Harmonie - Tanah Abang and back to Harmonie - Noordwijk - Kramat - Meester Cornelis / Mester. After 1882 the horse-tram lines have been reconstructed into steam-tram lines and gradually the traffic was expanded.

The old steam-tram service of the mentioned company NITM, which was antiquated in 1930 and the simple electric system of the other one company BETM, were reorganized and turned into a complete automatic electric system. This rebuilding of the electrification of the various lines, as well as the adaptation to the techniques of the electric streetcars, were effected on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1934. (More text on page 4)



3. Steam-tram heading south, Binnen Nieuwpoortstraat / Jl Pintu Besar Utara Batavia / Jakarta Kota 1927



**4. Steam-tram, Binnen Nieuwpoortstraat / Jl Pintu Besar Utara  
Oud Batavia / Jakarta Kota 1927**



**5. Steam-tram heading north, Binnen Nieuwpoortstraat / Jl Pintu Besar Utara  
near Stadhuisplein / Taman Fatahilah  
Oud Batavia / Jakarta Kota 1911**



**6. Steam-tram, Molenvliet West / Jl Gajah Mada  
Batavia / Jakarta 1905**

The total length of the lines was 40 km divided over 6 lines. The main line, nr 1, from Old Batavia / Jakarta Kota to Meester Cornelis / Mester, had a length of 14 km.

The traffic was divided into 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> class, the latter especially destined for Natives whereas on a flat truck, a so-called pikolan, facilities were offered for the transportation of fish, vegetables, fruit, etc., which was typical of Batavia.

Of the passenger traffic about 15 percent came for the account of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 85 percent for the 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> class. The rolling stock of the company consisted in 1937 of: 42 large motor cars, 39 small motor cars, 23 flat trucks and 52 trailers.

On the main line Old Batavia – Meester Cornelis a daily 6-minute service was maintained. In the afternoon after office hours a 7,5-minute service whereas on the other ones 7,5- and 10-minute services were maintained. The colonial authorities expected a favourable effect from the electrification. But a serious decline in the traffic commenced since 1930 and the subsequent crisis years.

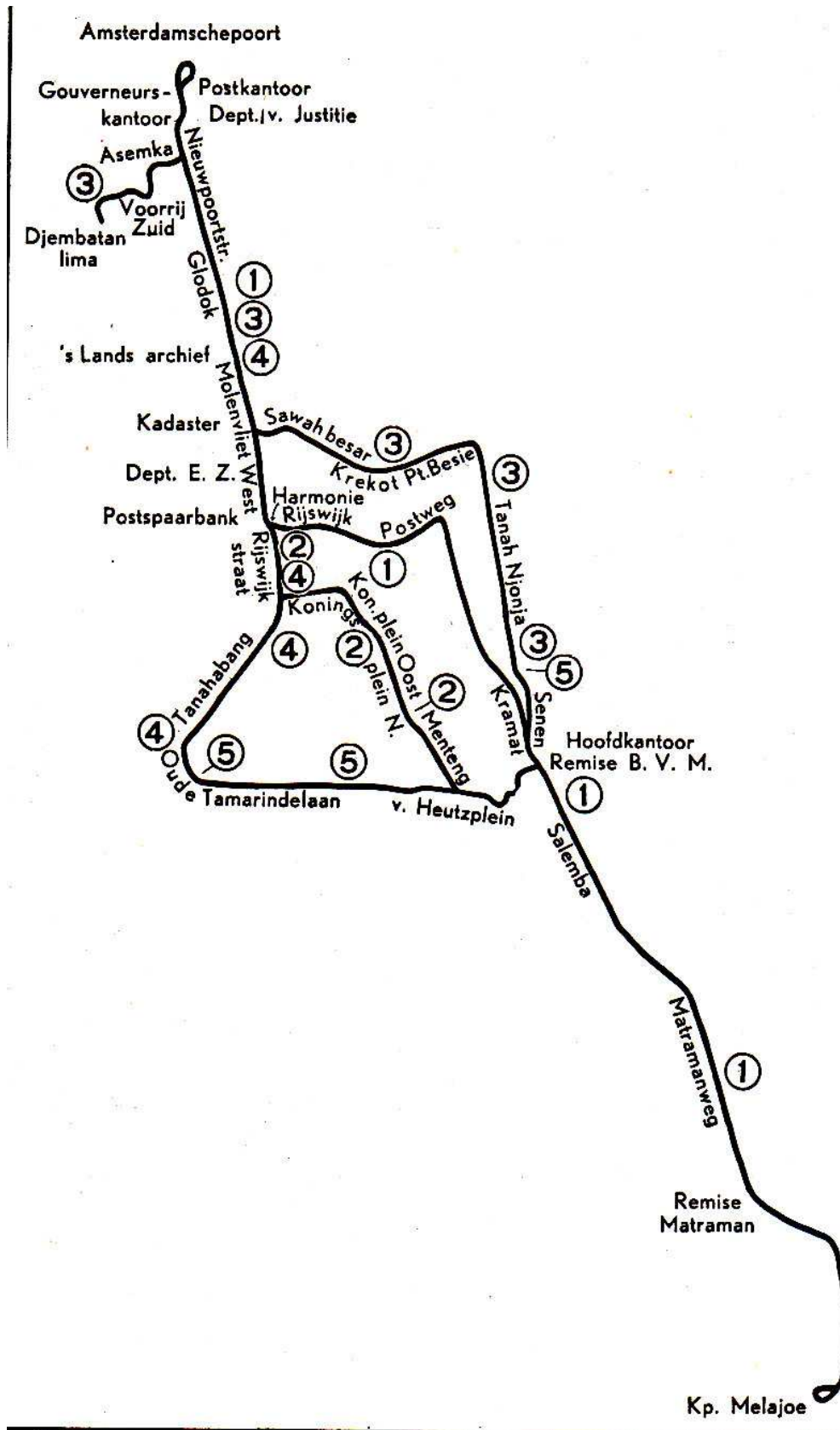
The year 1920 was a top year: the former two companies carried more than 21 million passengers whereas in 1930 11 million passengers were carried and this number decreased in 1936 to slightly less than 6 million. Since 1936 the traffic was increasing again. The increase was stimulated by tariff reductions. But nevertheless the serious competition by motorbuses, taxis and horse-carriages as well as the growth of the bicycle traffic meant a continuous threat to the Batavia street-car service.

In 1942 the Japanese Seibu Rikuyo Kioko Djakarta Shiden confiscated the Dutch colonial N. V. Bataviasche Verkeerkeersmaatschappij BVM / Batavia Traffic Company Ltd. The latter "returned" in 1947 and was seized by the Perusaahan Pengangkutan Djakarta (PPD) on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1954. (More text on page 5)

Between 1952 and 1962 the exploitation of the Batavia / Jakarta tramways came to an end, caused by financial losses. One of the many examples of the energy with which the Dutch colonial authorities from 1880 until 1942 tried to solve lags in economic and social development - in this case the stimulation of public transportation in Batavia / Jakarta - was from 1962 only a memory.



7. Batavia, railway lines, 1937



7.a Batavia, tramlines 1937

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## **Explanation 7.a**

**Amsterdamsche Poort = northern end of Jl Cengke**

**Nieuwpoortpoortstraat = Jl Pintu Besar**

**Molenvliet West = Jl Gajah Mada**

**Harmonie = Harmoni**

**Rijswijkstraat = Jl Majapahit**

**Koningsplein = Medan Merdeka**

**Rijswijk = Jl Veteran**

**Van Heutzplein = Jl Cut Mutia**

**Oude Tamarindelaan = Jl KH Wahid Hasyim**

**Matramanweg = Jl Mataram Raya**

**Gouverneurskantoor = Old Town Hall = Jakarta City Museum, Taman Fatahilah**

**1, 2, etc. = tram-line numbers**



**8. Steam-tram on Stadhuisplein / Taman Fatahilah  
The old building next to the Ned-Lloyd office is Café Batavia nowadays.  
Old Batavia / Jakarta Kota 1927**

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**9. Steam-tram (see at the right side of this picture the plume of smoke) on  
Rijswijk / JI Veteran  
Batavia / Jakarta 1924**



**10. Electric tramway, Kramat  
Batavia / Jakarta 1936**





**11. Stationsplein / Taman Stasiun Kota^**  
**Electric tram in front of Bank Impor-Expor, formerly the Nederlandsche Handelmaatschappij NHM. Mark this pikolan (luggage coach, see text).**  
**Old Batavia / Jakarta Kota 1936**



**12. Watch this man: dozing, maybe sleeping. Ostensibly! His proper wakefulness meant a cutthroat competition with the tramway companies. His horse - in heat and sun - suffers from dehydration: so far as I can see.**

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**12. Tram driving into Rijswijkse Straat / Jl Majapahit, colonial shopping street nr 1  
Harmoni, Batavia / Jakarta 1936**



**13. Important transfer location on the northern end of Molenvliet West / Jl Gajah Mada (southern end), Batavia / Jakarta 1934  
Top right one can see a part of the Hotel Des Indes.**

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**14. Hotel Des Indes, Molenvliet West / Jl Gajah Mada  
Batavia / Jakarta 1936**



**15. Along tram line 1: the Department (Ministry) of Civil Public Works along  
Molenvliet West / Jl Gajah Mada  
Batavia / Jakarta 1927**



Library Dirk Teeuwen, Holland  
Picolan (luggage coach),  
Batavia 1936

**16. Picolan coach: fruits, chickens, etc., etc.**

**From: Duparc, H. J. A.: Trams en tramlijnen, de elektrische stadstrams op Java;  
Rotterdam 1972**



Collection Dirk Teeuwen Holland

Batavia-Jakarta 1934

**17. Tram (line nr 1) approaches through Prinsenstraat / Jl Cengke its finish: the  
Amsterdam Gate  
Batavia / Jakarta 1934**

**One of my favourite romantic colonial pictures: the world, the way it felt and  
the way it was!!**

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**18. The Amsterdam Gate, Batavia / Jakarta 1905  
Tramway rail is visible at right.**

**Account, sources:**

**a. Pictures 1, 2, 6, 9, 12, 17: private lithograph and picture-postcard collection Dirk Teeuwen, Holland**

**Originally, pictures 1 and 2 are from:**

**Perelaer: Het kamerlid Van Berkenstein in Nederlandsch-Indië; Leiden Holland 1880**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen Holland**

**b. Picture 18: Gezichten uit Nederlandsch-Indië, aangeboden door de Amsterdamsche Maatschappij van Levensverzekering; Amsterdam 1907 p. 7**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen, Holland**

**c. Pictures 3, 4: Vries, J. J. de (Infantry Captain, retired); Jaarboek van Batavia en omstreken; Batavia 1927**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen Holland**

**d. Picture 5: Colijn, H. (editing): Neerlands Indië; Amsterdam 1911**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen Holland**

**e. Pictures 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: Municipality of Batavia: Batavia as a commercial, industrial and residential center; Batavia 1937**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen Holland**

**f. Picture 8: Vries, H. M. de: The importance of Java seen from the air; Batavia 1928**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen Holland**

**g. Picture 16: Duparc, H. J. A.: Trams en tramlijnen, de elektrische stadstrams op Java; Rotterdam 1972**

**Library Dirk Teeuwen Holland**

**h. Picture 19: Division of commerce of the Department / Ministry of agriculture, industry and commerce: Java Buitenzorg (Bogor), printed Batavia (Kolff & Co) 1924**



**Those were our colonial days!  
How could they ever end!  
Such a day was our friend.  
And deserved a song of praise  
(19. Molenvliet, Batavia – Jakarta 1920)**

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